

A

REVIEW

OF THE

Affairs of *FRANCE*:

With Observations on TRANSACTIONS at Home.

Thursday, May 10. 1705.

Impartiality is the Principal Beauty of an Author; without it, he ought not to expect either Reputation to his Character, or Regard to his Writings. In this Case I have a Difficult Task to Convince all the Readers of this Paper, because I do not publish all the Virulencies, Scandalous Actions, and Unaccountables that are sent to me on both sides; but were the Gentlemen, on both sides, to see the Pains I have taken, and the Care with which I have Conceal'd their Follies, they would own, if I have not Publish'd an Equal Number of each, I have Conceal'd as Unequal a Number the other way, and all in order to Peace.

I have told you, in our last, who are the Obstructors of our Peace, and have taken the freedom to give some Instances among those that Affront the Queen, Reproach the Bishops, and Slander their Neighbours.

I am now to tell you, Gentlemen, there are some among our selves, some Negative Tempers, that are Agents to our want of Peace, and who Deserve Reproof; and before I have done with them, perhaps, I may not be blam'd for Impartiality.

Among these, I must take my first Example in *Coventry*. 'Tis an Unhappy Instance, I confess, and, perhaps, my Observations on it, may be a little severe, and be ill taken, but I promis'd at first to regard the Anger neither of Great nor Small, in my strict adherence to

Truth of Fact, and just Reflection on real Crime, and I shall honestly keep my Word with you all.

In all my Observations of the sad Defection and Degeneracy of Manners in *England*, the greatest Encouragement to Vice, and Obstruction to our Reformation, lies in the Negligence and Evil Example of our *Magistrates*, whose Duty it is to suppress Vice and Immoralities, both by their Authority and Example; and I have often observ'd in this Case, that in *England* we have the best Laws the worst Executed of any Nation in the World.

In like manner I am sorry to say, the Negligence of those whose Duty and Office it is to prompt this Healing and Peaceable Temper, has given such a Loose to its contrary, that in some Places it runs out to all manner of Extremes.

Perhaps some People may be surpriz'd, when I shall tell them the want of Conduct, the Heat of Parties, and the Fury of the People of *England* is such, and it runs to that height, that a Civil War is already broke out in the Bowels of their Native Country.

But they will be fill'd with Wonder and Horrour, when they reflect upon the Particulars, and the sad Effects that this may have on the Nation, if some Needful Examples are not made to suppress it in time.

The City of *Coventry* is a large, and very Populous Inland City, and sends two Members to Parliament, which are chosen by the Freemen of the City——In this place, such has been the Continual Zeal and Heat of Parties, that the Division has risen up to the Greatest Animosities, and the Consequence has been Railing, Envyings, Fighting, and all sorts of Inveteracy and Violence. Club-Law has been the Decider of Controversies, and on every Election, Victory in the Street, has given Victory in the Poll.

These things are risen now to that height, that the Parties draw up in little Armies in the Streets, and Fight with all the Fury and Animosity imaginable, 500, and some say, a 1000 of a side.

The Consequences of these Mob-Engagements, are frequently Broken Heads, Bruised and Broken Limbs, as yet we do not hear of any Murthers committed; but that in time, it will come to that, there is no more question, than there is, whether a mischief is likely to Encrease by Custom, when the Exasperated Rabble are left to an Unrestrain'd Liberty.

My Business is not to Determine here, what may be the fatal Effects of such Violences, or to give the Histories of *Massinello* at *Naples*, the *Legged-Scol* in *Scotland*, the *De Witts* in *Holland*, or the like Melancholy Relations of the Power of Popular Tumult.

But as I am now enquiring into the Obstructors of the Nations Peace, I cannot but Console with my Native Country, that in the midst of a *Protestant* Nation, in a well Constituted, I cannot say a well Govern'd City, at a Juncture when Peace is so absolutely Necessary to Safety, when Her Majesty is so Earnestly pressing us to Unite, and when any Man that has the Use of his Sences, may see the Danger of Contention, and how fatal it is to all our hopes, that in such a Juncture as this, there should be Open War Declar'd between the Parties in the very Heart of the Nation, and Pitch'd Battles be fought with the utmost Rage of Unbridl'd Ungovern'd Prejudice.

When I have Exclaim'd against this Irregularity to some of the Inhabitants of this City of *Coventry*, I have been Answer'd with the usual Reply of People that sink under Evils they never attempt to Remedy, and my Mouth pretended to be stop't with the weak and most ridiculous Reply of, HOW CAN WE HELP IT.

How, Gentlemen, not help it? What have ye no Magistrates? No Mayors? No Sheriffs? No Officers? And if you have, and not help it, not suppress Riots and Tumults——Let me tell Mr. Mayor of *Coventry*, by way of Caution to all the Magistrates of other Towns, in like Cases, you are answerable for all the Disorders committed in the City; you are Punishable for not doing your Duty, in suppressing and preventing such things; you are the Keeper of the Queen's Peace; your Power is sufficient to break the Parties, to Dissipate and Disperse their Assemblies, and to Disarm them at their first Appearance; you have Power to Command all the Inhabitants to the Peace, to Demand Security of any you have good Reason to suspect, to commit all such as break it, and to Kill any that shall resist.

What will you say, when Her Majesty shall call you to an Account for the Disorders of the Town under your Government? Will it satisfy Her Majesty to tell her, that former Mayors and Sheriffs have attempted to prevent this Mischief in vain; that the Magistrates have been Trampled under the Feet of the Mob, and Driven out of the Streets; that the People will Fight, and you cannot help it?

There was, it seems, a Riot in the Streets on the . . . of April last, and 2 or 300 Engag'd of a Side, abundance Wounded and Knock'd Down; a Tumult altogether Destructive of Good Government, and fatal to the Publick Tranquility.

'Tis easie to know, at least, of the Principal Persons who Appear'd, and who was Concern'd in it of either side; the Ring-leaders, the Mol-Captains, cannot be hid. If Her Majesty should Demand of the Mayor of *Coventry*, How many of these he has taken up, and Bound over to the Sessions to Answer it? Or, How many he has caused to be Prosecuted, for Breach of the Peace, on either side? I would be glad to know, what his Worship would say? And what an Account he can give to Her Majesty for thus bearing Her Sword in vain?

Since this Battle, nothing is, it seems, more frequent in the Streets of *Coventry*, than to hear what Preparations of War are making on both Sides; what Gathering Confederates, what Encouraging one another to stand to it, what furnishing themselves with Auxiliaries, and getting stout Fellows out of the Country to back them, and all against the Day of Election? And

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ask any *Coventry* Man now, Who is like to Carry it? They will Unanimously tell you, They that Beat in the Street, They that get the Victory in the Fight, carry the Election, the strongest Side has the Day in the *Town Hall*.

And this may well be true, it seems, since all Freemen Poll, and no Man is Sworn at the Poll, nor is there any Lists of the Freemen; so that if the strongest Side, say a Broom-maker is a Freeman, tho' he never was in the Town, he is Poll'd; and who shall Dispute against Club-Law? —

Nor, it seems, can there be any such thing as a Scrutiny afterwards, there being no Books to Examine by.

These Irregularities, doubtless, were the Original Causes of these Tumults; and 'tis, no doubt, the Negligence of former Magistrates, that they have not been more Effectually regulated.

But let the former Mistakes have been what they will, 'tis the Duty of the present Magistrate, to prevent these Riotous Assemblies, and to keep the Peace; 'tis his Business, and he must give me leave to tell him, 'tis very Easie for him to do it Effectually.

'Tis not my Business to Instruct the Mayor of *Coventry*, or Descend to Particulars, and tell him by what Methods he may Disarm the Mob; but as the Easiness of bringing it to pass, will take from him all Excuse for the Neglect, so the Easiness of obtaining the Assistance of the Government, in case his own Power is too weak, will for ever render him answerable for all the Evil Consequences; and if any Blood is shed in this Quarrel, it lies at his Door both before God and Man.

'Tis the Duty of the Civil Magistrate, to Govern the Respective Towns, Cities, or Districts, in the Peace of God and the Queen, and by all Legal means, to maintain the Authority of the Law, to Disperse Unlawful Assemblies, suppress Riots and Tumults, prevent Battle and Blood, and bring Offenders to Justice.

If they find any Mischief of these sorts too strong for them, and that there is danger in it, they are, and it is their Indispensible Duty to Acquaint Her Majesty, or the Ministers of State of it, and desire both Assistance and farther Instructions.

Indeed our Elections are not to be Interrupted, Byas'd, or Aw'd with Soldiers, or Magistrates, because they are to be perfectly free—

But then neither are the Electors to come Arm'd to Vote, to keep in a Body at a place, either by Clamour, Noise, Threats, or any sort of Violence, to shut one another out.

The bare keeping the Peace, can by no means Influence, or Awe the Election; it can be no Interruption to the freedom of Voting, to guard the Avenues to the place, so that none shall come thither with any sort of Arms, or Weapons; nor to come into the Hall, and turn away from thence, all that have no Right to Poll, or that having Poll'd, any farther Concern themselves there.

If Proclamation be made the Day before the Election, That no Person shall appear in the Street with any Staff, Sword, or Weapon, that no Numbers of People be gathered together: If the Streets are kept clear from Bodies of Men, if the Passages to the Hall, are left open to any that come there to Vote Unarm'd, and in Peace; This is no awing an Election, nor will ever be taken as such. This is the Mayor's Duty, and if he does not do this, or something of this Nature, he is liable to be Punished for the Neglect.

Another Objection I find against this is, Who shall the Mayor get to do this? He is alone; all the People are Parties of one Side or another, and all are for Fighting, no Body will assist him.

To this I Answer, Let the Mayor send for the Constables, and let him see which of them will Engage to Discharge the Duty of his Office, and which will not; those that refuse, let him take care of them afterwards: If but one Constable in *Coventry* will do it, he is enough.

Let this Constable take the Mayor's Orders for preserving the Peace, in Writing, and Command the Assistance of such of the Inhabitants, as he knows are Men of Peace; let any Man refuse him at their Peril.

Arm'd with as many of these, as he sees needful to raise, and with such Weapons, Halberds, or other, as he sees cause, let him keep Ward the Day of, and the Day before the Poll; and posting his Men at the Principal Places of the City, let him take up every Man that appears Arm'd; let him Disperse every gathering Mob, and keep the Streets clear for the Freemen to pass and re-pass—Let Mr. Mayor, with a select Band of Citizens, who shall be desirous of Peace, Walk the Rounds of the City, to see that these do their Duty; and once every half Hour, clear the Hall, first by making Proclamation

clamation in the Queen's Name, for all Persons that are not Freemen, or that have Poll'd, to Depart: And Secondly, By taking up all that Disobey it.

Either Method will do it, or it will not.


If it will, how inexcusable will the Mayor of *Coventry* be, if he neglect it? How will all the future Tumults, either in this City, or in any part of this Kingdom, lie at his Door, and owe their Encouragement to his Negligence? How will our Laws grow into Contempt, and Magistrates be usefess Tools, of no manner of Signification?

In vain we talk of Peace, if Mob must prevail over Magistracy, and the Club Oppress the Halbert; no more let us talk of the Freedom of Elections, if Choice of Members must be carry'd by strength of Hand, and not by Number of Voices.

On the other Hand, if this Method will not do it, if the Civil Power be too Weak, if the Rabble be Rampant, your Duty, Mr. Mayor, is to Acquaint the Government; no doubt, but that Authority, by which you are in the Seat of Power, will maintain you there.

Her Majesty, as she has never yet made use of her Military Authority to Deal with any of her own Subjects, will, no doubt, be very Unwilling to begin with the City of *Coventry*; but if nothing but Troops of Horse will keep you quiet, you must thank your selves, the Peace must be maintain'd.

How Foolish are all those People, Cities, Countries and Parties, who when they might live in Peace and Tranquillity, Enjoying their Property, and with unusual Privileges love Tumults and Riots: 'Tis a Sign, Gentlemen, you do not know what War is; had you been under the Exercise of Foreign Armies, had you been in the *Palatinate*, or were your City upon the *Moselle*, or the *Ro*, you would know how to value your Peace. Pray, Gentlemen of *Coventry*, do not force the *Nation* and the *Government* to teach you how to value your Peace by the want of it, and to take Forfeiture of your Privileges, which for your Tumults, you ought to be punish'd with the loss of.

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